

Ebenezer Knight Dexter House
300 Angell Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-178

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
78-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI 178

EBENEZER KNIGHT DEXTER HOUSE

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Address: 300 Angell Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Flat 11, Lot 3

Present Owner and Occupant: Dr. Arnold Porter and wife Gladys H. Porter

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a moderately large frame house with brick ends, built about 1800.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1799 Nathan Waterman to Ebenezer K. Dexter in consideration of 3-1/2 acres given to me by your father Col. Knight Dexter, convey to him the said E. K. Dexter 1 certain lot of land containing 2-1/2 acres in that part of Providence called the Neck on the N side of the Road leading from the Baptist Meeting House to Central Bridge. Beginning at the S/E corner near the end of a Cross Street (Cooke St) leading to Governor Fenner's House thence N bounded E by E. K. Dexter, 225.99'; N by Col. K. Dexter 433.33'; W by grantor 241.07' and S by said Road 402.21', Deed Book 26, page 274, in Providence City Hall.

1805 Ebenezer Knight Dexter sells for \$5000 to Ebenezer Smith Thomas a certain lot of land bounded:

N by Col. Dexter 433.83' E by K. Dexter 225.99'
S by Road 402.21' W by Grantor 241.07'

together with the DWELLING HOUSE. . . the gangway to be kept open, Deed Book 29, page 316, in Providence City Hall.

1811 Ebenezer Smith Thomas sells for \$6000 to Doctor Philip Moser the above property, Deed Book 35, page 124, in Providence City Hall.

1812 Phillip Moser sells for \$6000 to Alexander Jones all those 2 lots in the so called Neck on the N side of the Road leading from the Baptist Meeting House to Central Bridge. Bounded:

N by Col Dexter 433.83' E by R Dexter 225.99'
S by said Road 402.21' W by Grantor 241.07'

It being the same land which Ebenezer K Dexter purchased of Nathan Hatcher in 1799, together with the DWELLING HOUSE and other buildings, Deed Book 35, page 35, in Providence City Hall.

1814 Mes. tax descriptions in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, for the 1814 Providence direct tax to the federal government: Alexander Jones. . . 1 lot of land joining land of the late Col Knight Dexter, containing about 4-1/2 acres. 1 Dwelling House 2 stories high with brick ends. . . 1 barn, 1 Chaise House, wood house, 1 summer house, 1 fowl house. . . privy. . . own slaves.

1837 Alexander Jones sells for \$6000 to John J Stimson a certain lot of land bounded:

E by Asylum land S by Angell Street
W by gangway N by Dexter Asylum

containing 4 acres, with DWELLING HOUSE, Deed Book 71, page 74, in Providence City Hall.

1860 John J Stimson devised his estate to his daughter Emily, Wills Book 18, page 514, in Providence City Hall. Emily married Lewis Diman, executor of J J Stimson's estate, and the property was in the Diman family until

1954 Property was taxed to Dr Arnold Porter and wife Gladys H Porter.

2. Date of erection: Between 1799 and 1805.
3. Notes on alterations and additions: The east wing was probably added after the main block, about 1820, according to the present owners. Several interior details were changed during the later nineteenth century, some of which have been restored by the present owners, as noted in the description.
4. Important old views: Present owners have several photographs of both the exterior and the interior hanging in the house, and before and after photographs of their restoration.

5. Sources of information: Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), p. 382.
Norman Morrison Ishaan, "Providence," White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs, Vol. IV, No. 2, pp 10, 14.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Cowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
December 1961.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a moderately large frame house with brick ends, built between 1799 and 1805, which preserves characteristic and dignified detail.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.
3. Wall construction: Frame and clapboards with brick end walls on main block and on north end of rear wing, brick laid in common bond, flat corner boards with beaded edges.
4. Porches: Shallow entrance porch, elliptical roof to match light over entrance door, open lattice sides. One-story porch at southeast corner, around setbacks of east wing.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys in end walls of main block. One chimney in east wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original entrance removed, present one taken from garden summer house mentioned in 1814 tax, six-panel main entrance door, side lights and elliptical top light with ornamental

metal ballions. Paneled, lighted wood door to east wing from southeast porch. Six-panel wood door with top light to rear wing.

- b. Windows and shutters: 6 over 6 light double hung windows, simple molded frames, lowered shutters.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof with monitor, shingles. Hip roof on east wing, gable roof on rear wing.
- b. Cornice: Molded cornice with fret bed mold. Lattice balustrade on roof of main block, continuing around east wing, and on monitor, with square paneled posts with urns.
- c. Dormers: Two gabled dormers on south front, side of main block.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Central hall, four-room plan, with secondary cross hall. Kitchen in wing to northwest rear. Second apartment in later east wing with wide stair hall, parlor, and kitchen, bedrooms on second floor.
- 2. Stairways: Central hall about 10' wide, divided by archway into front and rear halls. Main stair in rear portion, open well, U-shape, open string, simple scrolled step ends, molded and ramped handrail, round newels and balusters, notching shadow rail.
- 3. Flooring: Original wood floors, wide boards.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster
- 5. Doorways and doors: Molded doorways and paneled doors - some on first floor are later nineteenth century alterations; original on second floor with raised, six-panel doors, double molded architraves on doorways.
- 6. Trim: Molded chair rail in several rooms and part of hall, some with reeded frieze. Delicate reeded frieze under window sills in southeast bedroom. Ceiling cornices throughout, some later nineteenth century cornices on first floor; original cornices molded, some denticulated on first floor, some with reeded frieze. First floor northwest room, originally kitchen, now dining room, has wide board wainscot, mantelpiece from a house in Bristol, Rhode Island. Southwest room, now a library, restored by present owners who added bookcases.

7. Hardware: Both brass and glass door knobs, doors on butt hinges.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central, plus original fireplaces in all rooms. Marble mantel in southwest room not original. One-story wood mantels in other rooms, three with paneled or reeded pilasters, wide entablatures, and projecting molded mantel shelves. Two on second floor with opening surrounded by a crosseted enframement of moldings and reeding, surmounted by a wide paneled frieze, and a shallow mantel shelf with moldings and reeding.

D. Site

1. General setting: Small level lot, northeast corner of Angell Street and Diman Place, residential area, house set back at front, nearly on sidewalk on west side.
2. Enclosures: Open wood fence with rusticated corner posts, south and west sides.
3. Outbuildings: Garage at northeast corner of lot.
4. Walk: Brick to front entrance.
5. Landscaping: Informal with lawn, tress, and shrubs.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
December 1961.